Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War

Campaign Strategy, International Finance, and Domestic Politics

Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) asserted his princely authority by deciding at times to lead his own armies to war, despite the misgivings of advisers. But because Europe’s wars were fought with money borrowed against future revenues, even an emperor had to share power with his bankers and his parliaments. This book examines all three dimensions of European warfare. Charles’s role as commander in chief is evaluated by measuring the strategic aims of his personal campaigns. The process by which bankers took control of the finances of the Habsburg lands becomes clear from an examination of where the money came from to pay for Charles’s campaigns. Finally, a comparison of the realms that provided most of Charles’s revenues – Castile, Naples, and three Low Countries provinces – shows how some parliamentary bodies, if not all, successfully pursued long-term local interests by exploiting the dynasty’s need for money.

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For David Kieft
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Acknowledgments

Some years ago, a textbook publisher asked me for a new biography of Charles V that was to be done in time for the 500th anniversary of his birth (2000). In his own day Charles was a ruler of European scope, but in his own day it seems fair to say he was more feared than admired. Seeing Charles mainly as a man of war, I took it as my challenge to tell the story of his wars mainly from the emperor’s point of view, but with some appreciation of how others saw him, and of the long-term impact of his campaigns. That the book did not appear in 2000, and is not a biography, will suggest that there have been some detours along the way. In its final form, Emperor Charles V owes a great deal to the careful criticisms of Cambridge University Press’s three readers, whom I wish to thank, and to those of my Minnesota colleague, David Kieft, whose friendship and support of my work over the years I wish to recognize in a special way.
Abbreviations


Estado Archivo de Simancas, Valladolid, Coleccion Estado.

Abbreviations


HHSA-B Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, “Belgien.”


RSH Resolutiën van de Staten van Holland, 1524–1795 (278 vols., Amsterdam, 1789–1814).